2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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Assimilated lineages, therefore, all over Taleland, though thoroughly absorbed into the structure of the sub-clan or clan, suffer the same disabilities as the more precisely differentiated attached lineages; they cannot, however, make a virtue of this, as the latter sometimes can; they cannot explain away their status. To tax a person, openly or explicitly, with being the descendant of a slave (*da'abɔr bii*) is one of the deadliest insults, however remote his slave ancestry may be. This is more than a matter of etiquette. It amounts, in certain circumstances, to blasphemy against the spirit of the man who originally adopted this slave ancestor. Thus, under this rule of courtesy to clansmen and respect for ancestors, the status of an assimilated lineage is never commented on publicly unless a serious issue hangs on it or a severe quarrel is involved. This exceptional circumspection about assimilated lineages shows better than anything else their ambiguous position in the clan.

Such elements of the social structure as these are not apparent at first glance. I did not discover the existence of assimilated lineages at Tongo until the end of my first year in the field. To do so it was essential to have a very thorough understanding of the way the lineage system works and of the internal structure of the Tale community. I was able then to notice and to be puzzled by the absence, or self-effacement, of certain people in situations where they would normally be representing their lineage segments. It was not the behaviour to be expected of them if their segments were of equal status with the authentic segments of Mosuor biis. Veiled hints began to have a meaning which confidential informants confirmed.

One of my earliest friends and frankest informants at Tongo was Sayəbazaa, an elder in whom the chief had the greatest confidence and who was universally esteemed for his industry and probity. Sayəbazaa was the head (*kpeem*) of Nəŋsuur yidɛm, a major segment of one of the major segments of Tongo. One of its members held an important and confidential office under the chief. Nəŋsuur yidɛm appeared to be of the true agnatic line of Mosuor. I took this for granted the more readily because, when the Great Festival season came round and all the elders of Tongo were summoned to the chief's house so that a diviner could be consulted, it was Sayəbazaa who consulted the diviner on behalf of the chief and the whole of Tongo, in order to ascertain what offerings must be given to Mosuor and the chiefly ancestors.

Nevertheless, Nəŋsuur yidɛm is an assimilated lineage whose founding ancestor is vaguely said to have arrived with Mosuor. Though almost completely absorbed by the authentic line of Mosuor biis, a last barrier remains, which I discovered only through one of the most striking of the events which revealed the existence and status of accessory lineages at Tongo. It showed also how there is a continuous process of adjustment going on in every sector of the social structure, resolving the tensions and contradictions latent in it.

It was an occasion of historic importance marking the climax of one phase in the absorption of the accessory lineages by the authentic lineages of Tongo. The occasion was that of the great thanksgiving sacrifice to the founding ancestors of Tongo, Mosuor and his son Sɛyaheg, which took place in 1936. Beer and animals were contributed by the chief, who gave